**Western Kentucky University's Institutional Plan
for *wkuREAL*, the Adult Learner Initiative
of University College**

Introduction

At Western Kentucky University, "Project Graduate" has developed into two initiatives: Project Finish and *wkuREAL*. Project Finish, which began in January, 2008, provides transcript assessment and some advising for WKU students seeking to complete their degree after some years' absence, and who have completed at least 90 hours. *wkuREAL* Adult Learner Counselors work with any non-traditional student, whether or not he or she has taken courses at WKU (or any institution).

wkuREAL, a cross-campus/community effort with an ambitious institutional plan, represents Phase II of its Fall 2008 incarnation as the "Adult Learner Portal." From August to December, 2008, efforts were focused on research—studying the results of the ALI and the ALFI surveys; engaging in focus groups with students, faculty, and staff (seven in all); and on formulating a strategic plan—identifying a name and an image (shown above), developing a marketing strategy, and identifying the key areas for institutional efforts to promote an environment conducive to learning for non-traditional students.

Perhaps the most important single activities have involved the Adult Learner Counselors. Funded both internally and by the CPE's stewardship grants, three new Adult Learner Counselors were hired in the Fall semester of 2008. Since that time, they have eagerly entered the planning and implementation of *wkuREAL*. They have met with almost 30 individuals or groups of people representing service units, academic colleges, and specific departments. Their collective communication skills and their commitment to building collaborative relationships have ensured that the purposes of *wkuREAL* are understood and welcomed by almost everyone.

Another crucial step was to hold the first meeting of the newly formed Adult Learner Advisory Council, composed of 25 members representing each academic College, a range of key Support Services, the three Regional Campuses, and the community. At that meeting, a brainstormed list of approximate 25 ideas was created and small groups formed. A summary of their initial activities follows:

Marketing: A brochure was developed (Appendix I) and distributed to every faculty member at WKU, along with a letter from the College representatives introducing the initiative and inviting faculty to refer adult learners to the counselors.

Outreach: An additional 500 brochures will be distributed to locations in the counties of WKU's service area. A brochure for the regional campuses is under development; it will look like the current brochure but with relevant contact information.

Curriculum: With representatives from each College, this group begins the crucial process of raising awareness about "adult-focused courses" and helping faculty develop flexible programming to meet the needs of a diverse range of potential students.

Support Svcs: This group of service providers (Registrar, Admissions, Financial Aid, etc.) has met once so far to identify strategies for being more responsive to adult learners.

Prior Learning: Another endeavor is to develop portfolio-based assessment of prior learning; a team went to Louisville on 4/30/09 to visit with the people responsible for their Adult Workforce initiative; and plans are underway to bring a CAEL consultant to WKU and to attend a national conference.

Members of the Adult Learner Advisory Council are committed to supporting and creating positive change. We recognize a number of challenges, which will be further developed in Part C of each of the following sections: Financial Aid, Flexible Programming, and Prior Learning.

1. Financial Aid for Adult Learners

A.   Please describe current financial aid programs for adult learners.

Currently the following grants, loans, scholarships and other programs are offered to Adult Learners through state, institutional and federal sources:

Grants	Annual Award Limits
Pell	Up to $4,731
Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)	Up to $500
National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent Grant (SMART Grant)	Up to $4,000 for each of the third and fourth academic years
College Access Program (CAP) Grant	Up to $1,900
Go Higher Grant	Up to $1,000

Loans	Annual Award Limits
Federal Perkins Loan	$4,000 maximum for undergraduate and $6,000 for Graduate & Professional
Subsidized/Unsubsidized Stafford	$12,500 maximum for undergraduate and $20,500 maximum for Graduate & Professional
Parent (PLUS) Loan	Maximum amount, cost of attendance less any other awards

Scholarships	Annual Award Limits
Byrd Honors Scholarship	Up to $1,500.
Early Childhood Development Scholarships	Up to $1,800
Kentucky Educational Excellence	Range $36 to $500. Depending on ACT score
KHEAA Teacher Scholarship	Up to $6,250
Minority Educator Recruitment & Retention (MERR) Scholarship	Up to $5,000

wkuREAL Scholarship	$1,000. Offered for the first time in 2009 by University College, ongoing awards ($1-$3,000)

Military	Annual Award Limits
Kentucky National Guard	Up to in-state tuition
Military Tuition Assistance (all branches of service	Up to $250 per credit hour toward tuition
Military Spouse Enhancement Act	One-time grant of $6000 per student
Montgomery GI Bill	
Chapter 30	$1321 per month for 36 months (plus kicker if eligible)
Chapter 1606	$317 per month for 36 months (plus kicker if eligible)
Chapter 1607	Between $528 & $1056 per month (plus kicker if eligible)
Chapter 31	Minimum $541 per month (based on number of dependents) for 48 months
Chapter 33	Between $3210 and $804 per month plus $1000 annual book stipend plus % of in-state tuition
Chapter 35	$915 per month for 45 months

Other Programs	Annual Award Limits
Work Study	Minimum wage supplemental income, exempt
Vocational Rehabilitation	Partial payment of tuition & other services
Tuition Waivers	Varies per program

WKU currently offers the following programs/services in an effort to provide financial flexibility:

- Payment plans (available in 4 & 5-pay increments)
- Deferment plan for veterans receiving monthly benefits
- Deferment option for students relying on third-party employee sponsorships in which contribution does not occur until the end of the semester
- Review of financial information for students that are subject to drop for non-payment and identification of resources that may be available to help with outstanding balance

B.   Goals for Modifying, Expanding, and Increasing Financial Aid for Adult Learners

WKU has identified several initiatives with an emphasis on minimizing financial barriers for adult learners.

Military
WKU recognizes that a significant number of adult learners exist within the various military units.   With the anticipated return of many soldiers to the U.S., the number of

military personnel with an interest in returning to college is expected to increase. In an effort to better meet the needs of this group, WKU has proposed a new military rate that will allow any member of armed forces on active duty (regardless of domicile or permanent duty station) to be charged the in-state rate. The proposed policy also covers dependents of active duty military personnel. Additionally, veterans and qualifying dependents that choose to attend WKU will be charged the in-state rate as a maximum.

WKU also intends to expand the existing military deferment plan to include recipients of benefits under the new Chapter 33 program. The plan will include allowing such students to priority register even though a balance is still owed to the university.

Non-traditional Scholarships
WKU plans to implement a pilot program that will provide a scholarship opportunity for non-traditional students combined with an educational opportunity in financial literacy. The program will require participants to attend three mini-sessions focusing on various financial topics prevalent in today's economy. In exchange for attending the sessions, the student will be issued a bookstore voucher that can be used toward the student's cost of books and supplies.

Employer Reimbursement
WKU will work with various local and regional employers in an effort to establish educational assistance benefits or Lifelong Learning Accounts for their employees. If funding permits, WKU will further explore the feasibility of a matching program to demonstrate WKU's commitment to workforce development for adults.

FAFSA Completion
WKU currently notifies students that owe an outstanding balance after the official due date and encourages such students to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). WKU plans to create a communication specific to adult learners that can be sent upon enrollment to encourage early completion of the FAFSA in an effort to fully utilize federal and state sources of aid.

C.   Plans to Achieve Modification Goals for Financial Aid

Military
Upon approval of the proposed military rate by the Board of Regents, WKU will determine actions necessary for implementation. WKU will create a marketing strategy to inform prospective students of the new tuition rate.

WKU will internally identify procedures necessary for implementation of the new deferment plan for Chapter 33 eligible students.

Non-Traditional Scholarship
WKU will identify funding options for the proposed non-traditional scholarship. Currently more than 3,000 students attending WKU are considered non-traditional.

The amount of book vouchers that can be offered is contingent upon the availability of funding and the estimated number of participants.

WKU will identify topics to be covered in the financial literacy sessions and secure professionals to provide such sessions.

Employer Reimbursement

WKU will work with the local Chamber of Commerce, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, Cabinet for Economic Development, and Education and Workforce Development Cabinet in an effort to identify potential employers. WKU will attempt to secure funding for a matching program. The percentage of the match is contingent upon the availability of funding and the estimated number of participants.

FAFSA Completion

WKU will create outreach materials to be sent to non-traditional students emphasizing early completion of the FAFSA. The materials will also provide information on the *wku*REAL program and assistance opportunities for adult learners.

2. Flexible Academic Programming

A. Current Flexible Academic Programming Options

WKU provides a variety of flexible academic programming options that benefit adult learners as they are introduced (or reintroduced) to the college environment.

Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies

The Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies degree provides an alternative four-year program for non-traditional students who do not need or desire the academic specialization involved in traditional major or major/minor programs. This degree program allows considerable latitude and flexibility to satisfy individual interests and needs. In lieu of the major/minor required by traditional degree programs, the student must complete a broad area of emphasis (complementary courses from different academic disciplines) of at least 36 semester hours of course work approved by the interdisciplinary studies degree advisor.

For some students, WKU's Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies serves as a completer degree; students from *any* associate degree program qualify for admission.

Students may select one of broad areas of emphases listed below:

- Arts
- Humanities
- Science
- Business

- Education
- Technology
- Health
- Organization and Communication of Ideas
- Social and Behavioral Science
- Social Justice & Equity Studies

Students also have the option of requesting a broad area of emphasis not listed above. The written request, based on specific individual objectives, must be made by the student and approved by the advisor and Dean of University College.

Online Learning

At WKU, we are committed to bringing an increasing number of online educational opportunities to our non-traditional students. Online courses and programs offer significant flexibility, allowing students who cannot participate in a traditional classroom setting to continue their education in a way that will fit their busy lives. There are programs available at the graduate and undergraduate level, including certificates and endorsements. Students enrolled in online courses have access to a number of resources that help to ensure a quality learning experience. These accredited online classes and degree programs equal our traditional programs in meeting students' needs, providing access to faculty, and ensuring interaction with other students. Academically, online classes are equally rigorous and WKU transcripts and diplomas do not note a difference between residential and distance learning courses and programs

WKU currently has the following Associate's programs completely on line:

- Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education
- Interdisciplinary Studies
- Office Systems Technology
- Paramedicine (Completion Degree)

Additionally, WKU currently has the following Bachelor's programs completely on line:

- Family and Consumer Sciences (Child Studies Concentration)
- Interdisciplinary Studies
- Computer Information Technology (Completion Degree)
- Technology Management (Completion Degree)
- Dental Hygiene (Completion Degree)

In addition, numerous courses in other programs—especially Master's degrees and graduate certificates—are available online with more becoming available each semester.

Adults with Existing College Credit

One group of adult learners that we particularly focus upon is those who already have some college-level work, or perhaps even an associate's degree, from a community or technical

college. We offer an array of articulation agreements and other transfer tools in support of seamless transfer of credit between WKU and KCTCS, IVY Tech and other community colleges. For example, the admissions office at WKU maintains a course-by-course Transfer Credit Articulation Guide that will allow students to determine WKU course equivalency for any course taken at virtually any institution (including all KCTCS and IVY Tech colleges). Using this guide, our non-traditional students may evaluate how their existing coursework articulates into any WKU degree program. Advisors are available to assist in answering any question a student may have and to help them design a degree program that builds upon whatever credit they might have previously earned. The web address for the Transfer Credit Articulation guide is:

https://acsapps.wku.edu/pls/prod/wkup_tar_trans_display.wkup_tar_trans_get_sbgi

True "+2" Programs

For those non-traditional students who already have an associate's degree, WKU is working to design true +2 programs that will build upon *any* AA, AS, or AAS degree program. No complicated articulation agreements or lists of which classes may or may not transfer are required.   The Associates Degree is accepted as a complete unit. Some of these programs even have approved waivers of upper division credit requirements, making it even easier for students to obtain their baccalaureate degree. Some examples of these true +2 programs are as follows:

- Technology Management. The 4-year degree in Technology Management (formerly Applied Technology) is designed for students who have graduated from a 2-year technical college with either a certificate or associate degree. This major enables graduates to apply their 2-year technical education toward a 4-year degree. The department provides opportunity for graduates with management backgrounds to advance in their chosen career paths. The program is popular with recent graduates from technical colleges, and individuals currently employed in business and industry seeking career advancement. Classes are delivered on the main campus, available at other locations through interactive TV, and via the web.

- Systems Management. Systems Management (SM) is Western Kentucky University's professional major for career-focused students. Modern organizations are growing more complex and need people who have a "Systems Perspective". This is the ability to see the big picture, adapt to change and be able to manage accordingly. The SM major is designed to prepare graduates with the knowledge, skills, and values to effectively apply managerial principles and tools in diverse organizational settings. The Systems Management (SM) program works closely with area Community/ Technical Colleges to help students meet their educational goals. The SM program will accept the A.A., A.S., or A.A.S. degree (in any major) as a complete transfer into the program. Professional Concentrations include: Digital Media Systems, Geographic Information Systems, Government Systems, Health-Care Systems, Industrial/Manufacturing Systems, Military Systems (Civilian), Human Resource Development, Administrative Systems, Information Systems, Criminology Systems, Technical Writing, Technical Sales, Technical Training

- Health Sciences. The Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences is designed for students who are interested in pursuing a health and human sciences related career. The program is an interdisciplinary program that provides an option for students with a Health related A.S. who wish to continue their education. An Associate Degree in a following major from KCTCS can transfer into WKU for the Health Sciences B.S. degree as a required concentration: Clinical Laboratory Technology, Dental Hygiene, Medical Information Technology, Nuclear Medicine, Nursing, Occupational Therapy Assistant, Physical Therapy Assistant, Radiography, Respiratory Therapy, Sonography, and Surgical Technology. In addition, the Health Science program at WKU is willing to discuss additional Associate degree Health programs from KCTCS at any time for inclusion in this agreement.

B. Goals for Modifying, Expanding, and Increasing Flexible Programming

1. Increase flexible programming across campuses.
2. Develop strategic curriculum initiatives for selected Kentucky communities.
3. Develop a baccalaureate degree in professional studies.
4. Offer portfolio-based prior learning assessment.

C. Plans to Achieve Modification Goals for Flexible Academic Programming

1. Work with Adult Learner Advisory Council and representatives from each College to assess program needs and goals for adult learners.
2. Develop a timeline for enhancing existing and developing new "adult-focused" programs.
3. Invite Lumina Foundation representative to campus to discuss funding initiatives.
4. Offer innovative "paired courses" (first instance, summer 2009) so that students can take courses back to back and so that content and delivery are coordinated.
5. Seek external funding for flexible academic programming.
6. Develop off-site programming for key courses/programs. The Outreach Group will survey the needs of adult learners. They will also act as a liaison between the university and community to discern or develop appropriate resources.
7. Work with existing programs to develop an adult-focused interdisciplinary professional studies degree.
8. Visit University of Louisville to discuss prior learning initiative there; invite CAEL consultant; attend national conference; appoint PLA coordinator.

3. Credit for Prior Learning

A. Current Prior Learning Assessments

For the most recent two semesters (Fall 2008 and Spring 2009), 1,527 courses were transcripted through AP, CLEP, Departmental Exam, ACT and Military ACE recommendations. It's important to note that some students may have taken advantage of several of these opportunities,

so the numbers do not represent discreet users. Multiply by 3 for the total credit hours. Soldiers average about 40 hours in their AARTS transcripts.

	ACT	APP	CLG	CLS	DPT	IBP	KOC	MIL	NUR	NOC	SAT	SOC
FALL	304	786	8	112	60	18	0	0	4	0	33	21
Spring	2	18	10	49	43	2	1	1	0	1	0	54
Total	306	804	18	161	103	20	1	1	4	1	33	75

ACT and SAT	exemptions for high scores in English
APP	AP class taken in high school
CLG and CLS	CLEP
DPT	Departmental challenge exams
IBP	International baccalaureate exam, scores earned on standardized
IB	tests administered in high school
SOC/SOCAD	military credit
KOC and NOC	vocational credit
NUR	automatic credit that is given for a specific list of classes due to passing two particular nurse licensing tests

Departmental Exams

Students enrolled at WKU may receive credit on the basis of departmental examinations in any course listed as satisfying a general education requirement. Departments may offer departmental exams in other courses at their discretion.

A department may adopt a standardized exam available from outside the University or develop an appropriate proficiency examination within the department by means of a faculty committee. Departmental proficiency examinations may be written, oral or both. The fee is $25 per credit hour. Credit will be awarded upon successful completion of the exam. The exams are pass/fail; letter grades are not assigned.

Military Service Credit

Individuals who have served on active duty in a branch of the military for 181 days or more and earned an honorable discharge may receive three semester hours of credit applicable to category F of the general education requirements. In order to receive such credit, students should submit a copy of their DD214 to the Office of Admissions.

Individuals who have attended military schools, and who are currently enrolled at WKU, may receive academic credit applicable toward a degree providing the training is recommended for academic credit by the American Council on Education.

As a SOC institution, we also award credit based upon DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST) and Excelsior College Examinations (ECE), and Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) as recommended by the ACE Guide.

No grades are recorded for any type of military service credit, only earned hours. No WKU charge.

Standardized Testing Programs

- College Level Examination Program (CLEP) – Should be taken prior to the student's initial enrollment in college or early in the first semester of the freshman year. WKU grants credit for both the General and Subject Examinations. Students register and pay through a testing center.

- ACT and SAT English – A student scoring 29 or above on the English section of the ACT or 620 or above on the verbal section of the SAT may be awarded three credit hours for ENG 100. No charge by WKU.

- Advanced Placement Program – Credit is awarded for appropriate scores earned on standardized AP tests administered in high school. No charge by WKU.

- International Baccalaureate – Credit is awarded for appropriate scores earned on standardized IB tests administered in high school. No charge by WKU.

Miscellaneous

- ROTC – Six (6) credit hours are awarded to students who complete the summer Leader's Training Course or the summer Leadership Development and Assessment Course at Ft. Knox. Credit is awarded for MIL 210 or MIL 410. No charge by WKU.

- Paramedicine - Forty (40) credit hours are awarded to students pursing the associate degree in Paramedicine who have Emergency Medical Technician certification. No charge by WKU.

- Nursing

  Associate: Upon admission to the Associate Degree Nursing Program and after successful completion of BIO 131c, CFSC 111c, MA 109c or MA 116c, PSYC 199c, CHM 109c and NUR 110c, the Licensed Practical Nurse may submit proof of the current LPN license to receive six (6) credit hours for NUR 100c. No charge by WKU.

  Baccalaureate (post RN program): Students who successfully pass the NLN Acceleration Challenge Exams or PEP exam will receive thirty-one (31) lower division hours in nursing. No charge by WKU.

- Foreign Language – Based upon the score on the foreign language placement exam, students may gain 3 or 6 hours of verified credit if placed into a foreign language course numbered 102 or above if they pass that course with a grade of "C" or higher and upon payment of the $25 per hour departmental exam fee.

- Medical Technology: Thirty-six (36) credit hours are awarded to students who successfully complete a one-year clinical experience in a hospital environment. No charge by WKU.

- Vocational Credit: Eighteen (18) credit hours may be earned by passing the written and performance components of the competency exam administered by the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) or the Kentucky Occupational Testing Institute (KOCTI). No charge by WKU.

  The Workforce Development Cabinet of the Kentucky Department of Education recommends that eighteen (18) credit hours be granted for national licensure for vocational programs that do not offer a NOCTI exam (i.e. Master Electrician, Auto Technician). No charge by WKU.

B. Goals for Modifying, Expanding, and Increasing Prior Learning Assessment

University College, in conjunction with the Adult Learner Advisory Council, is moving forward with the following plans for expanding prior learning assessment:

1. Provide portfolio-based assessment for students in University College programs.
2. Serve as a model for university-wide portfolio-based assessment.

C. Plans to Achieve Modification Goals for Prior Learning Assessment

1. Visit with representatives of the BS in Workforce Leadership at the University of Louisville.
2. Attend the national conference on prior learning at Princeton.
3. Hire a coordinator of Prior Learning Assessment for University College.
4. Begin implementation by summer 2010.

4. Campus Climate

A. Current Campus Climate

The current WKU Bowling Green campus climate relating to adult learners is in the middle of positive change. The three adult learner counselors (ALC) are meeting with departments and service units to learn what successes and challenges remain to make the campus more adult friendly. A few departments are either already transforming their programs to attract adult learners, or they are in the midst of making the initial changes necessary to do so. The majority of programs, however, still center on traditional college offerings.

B. Goals for Changing the Campus Climate

1. Foster a philosophy that recognizes and meets the unique needs of adult learners
2. Designate a place for adult learners to gather, network, have computer access, meet for workshops

C. Plans to Achieve Changes in Campus Climate

1. Adult Learner Counselors will continue meeting with unit personnel to address problem areas and advocate for adult learners.
2. The Advisory Council will begin making concrete suggestions for marketing, program changes, and student services to appropriate unit directors.
3. University College will seek a place on campus designated for adult learners.
4. Funds will be sought and secured for equipment and furniture to facilitate the success of adult learners on campus.